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Health briefs: Commuters encouraged to bike, walk to work

The News-Press staff

BikeWalkLee: A Coalition Working to Complete the Streets in Lee County, will announce its launch on the steps of the Old Lee County Courthouse in downtown Fort Myers at 8:15 a.m. May 15 as part of the national Bike-to-Work Day.

Members and invited guests will hold a press conference, followed by the group proceeding to the Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting at 9 a.m., where MPO members may vote on a resolution encouraging local governments and state agencies to expand and better coordinate alternate transportation options in proposed transportation projects and planning.

"The need for better alternate transportation options in Lee County is clear," said BikeWalkLee organizer Dan Moser. "The county's carbon footprint ranks almost last of the top 100 metro areas, and we lag behind state and national averages for commuting using alternate transportation modes.

"One reason is people who bike or walk may not feel safe. Lee exceeded the state averages for bike and pedestrian facilities in 2007, which underscores the need for more bike and pedestrian facilities, more alternate transportation options and more integration of those options into the overall transportation plan. That's what this coalition aims to promote."

BikeWalkLee is a grass-roots coalition of organizations, individuals and businesses advocating safe and accessible streets for biking, walking and public transit, according to a press release.

It will work to raise public awareness and advocate for complete streets in Lee County - streets that are designed, built, operated and maintained for safe and convenient travel for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

Viable biking, walking and public transit alternatively reduces traffic congestion, saves money, improves health, enhances the local economy, provides access for seniors, children and non-drivers, and makes the community more livable, supporters say.

Visit the organization's Web site at www.BikeWalkLee.org for more information, statistics and background.